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Legal Support for the Department of Veterans Services

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Adopted
July 18, 2012

1. **Objective:** To improve legal support for the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) by assigning a Senior Assistant Attorney General to DVS on a full-time basis.
2. **Background:**
 - DVS is provided legal support by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG). A Senior Assistant Attorney General (SAAG) is assigned to DVS. Approximately 50% of the SAAG's time is devoted to DVS, the remainder to other OAG clients.
 - The SAAG assigned to DVS has a multitude of responsibilities, including: confidential legal advice for the DVS Commissioner and senior directors, contract and procurement review and negotiation, legislative and budget review, HIPAA issues, human resource/employee relation issues, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) review, and citizen board support.
 - The SAAG assigned to DVS is a most valuable resource to the agency.
3. **Discussion:**
 - DVS is a complex agency with a statewide mission. In ten years, DVS has grown from fewer than 60 employees to more than 600 employees and from a \$3 million annual budget to a \$55 million annual budget.
 - In the past decade, DVS opened Virginia's second veterans care center – the third, fourth, and fifth centers are in the planning stage. Through the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, DVS taken on the mission of helping veterans access care for combat stress or traumatic brain injury.
 - These new missions, and the expansion of other DVS services, dictate the requirement for a full-time SAAG. The DVS Commissioner and his senior staff must have quick, accurate, and decisive legal answers whenever legal questions arise.
 - Assigning a SAAG to DVS on a full-time would be a "good business practice" and will keep Virginia moving forward towards the goal of being the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.
4. **Recommendation:** That the Governor work with the Attorney General to have a Senior Assistant Attorney General assigned to the Department of Veterans Services on a full-time basis.